SHALL IT BE FRANCE FIRST OR EUROPE FIRST?

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PARIS, Nov. 15—Just as Premier Mendes-France was about to start for North America this week, in the full tide of a prestige gained while turning his back on a European union of the federal type, the principal advocate and designer of this kind of union decided the time had come to make a fight in its defense.

From the vantage point of Luxembourg, where he spends most of his time as chairman of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community—the only existing example of federal or supranational authority in Europe—Jean Monnet, who practically invented the community, concluded that the trend which it exemplified was in danger of being reversed.

This danger had been increasing visibly since M. Mendes-France, for what he believed excellent reasons, liquidated the long-pending European Defense Community treaty in favor of a substitute plan, and was confirmed in this action by the apparently enthusiastic commendation of President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, both of whom had previously backed the Defense Community.

Washington's Viewpoint

Washington still supports the Coal and Steel Community, to which it has agreed to lend $100,000,000. But it has accepted philosophically the rejection of the Defense Community, although this was regarded as a blow to the cause of European union.

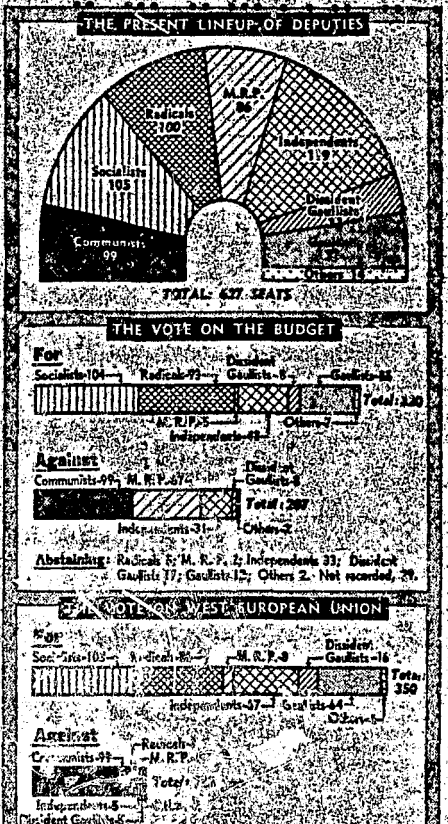
M. Mendes-France and a majority of the French National Assembly objected to the Defense Community on many grounds. One was its supranational character. Another was its geographically limited character, which meant the absence of Britain.

Meanwhile M. Mendes-France's economic policy, which is frankly nationalist, is based on the assumption that French economic recovery must be the first aim and that it must be sought on national lines. His Minister of Industry and Commerce recently expressed the view that the single European market for coal and steel should not be extended to other commodities.

It is possible that a majority of Frenchmen agree with M. Mendes-France that the Monnet technique for uniting Western Europe is ambitious and that M. Monnet is in too great a hurry.

M. Monnet, the great dangler in such view. He believes that if there is to be a federal union

MENDES-FRANCE AND THE ASSEMBLY



Budget vote was taken last week; W. E. U. vote came several weeks ago. Groups designated as "For" are those supporting Premier's position.

are postponed indefinitely and meanwhile solutions of European economic and political problems are sought on national lines, habits and practices will crystallize that will forestall the movement toward federation by preventing the surrender of sovereignty that would be necessary to a federal union.

Others in France who back the Monnet doctrine contend that within two or three years a national West German army, even though under North Atlantic command, will become a potential political if not a military threat as a result of the abandonment of the Defense Community which would have put the new German forces into a European army.

German Apprehension

This is not merely a French apprehension. It was that of Dr. Konrad Adenauer, West German Chancellor, who ardently supported the European army plan because he feared a revival of German militarism.

Abandonment of the Defense Community is further regarded as a blow to the "European idea" because E. D. C. was designed as a twin of the Coal and Steel Community. The two were to be under the same European Assembly and were to be almost identical in structure and institutions. They were to be completed by a European Political Community which would direct them through a European Executive and Legislature and would constitute, in limited spheres, a genuine European federal Union.

Such was the Monnet dream, which inspired many Europeans and gave reality to the Coal and Steel Community, only to run into the snag of French reluctance to rearm West Germans within a merely Continental community from which Britain was absent.

Thus it was the French fear of the Germans, revived too soon after the war that checkmated M. Monnet and the convinced Europeans, as they are called in France. Had there been no Korean invasion and no United States insistence on German rearmament in 1950, the history of the [illegible] might have been different. Had M. Monnet and Robert Schuman, then Foreign Minister, made their appeal to the French people, rather than to French politicians, that might have been different. The Defense Community treaty was defeated also by the failure fully to inform the French people of what it was and what it meant.

Union of the Monnet type, which would be directed inward, turning Western Europe into one great customs union with no tariff or other trade barriers within it—as is now the case for coal and steel in the areas of the six member countries—would amount to an economic revolution. Official Washington has encouraged moves in this direction, on the theory that what the American colonies did Europe might do.

Obstacles Noted

But M. Monnet is not unaware of the obstacles and of the damage such a union would do to industries now protected by national tariffs and the vast readaptation of industries and labor that would be necessary. He would create a huge fund to finance this European equivalent of what, in Anglo-French, is called "recyclage" to meet foreign competition.

The Monnet doctrine entails the assumption that this kind of unity, to be attained gradually but to be sought steadily, is the destiny of Western Europe. M. Monnet believes the nations are too small to fit the world of modern technique—that is, to content themselves with national markets safeguarded by protection. He thinks they can expand their production and raise their living standards only by creating a large European market.

Thus the influence of science seems to him the major factor working for European union. United States influence has been an important factor, often though it was by United States insistence on rearming the Germans, which works against federal union.

On the other side is the position of Britain, unwilling so far to consider herself European enough to take part in anything like a federal union. Her absence worries Continentals, who feel that without her Western Europe is not complete or balanced politically. M. Monnet's hope was that once the federal type of union took a concrete and successful shape, Britain would join or closely associate with it. This hope has been partly justified by the British acceptance of an agreement to consult systematically with the Coal and Steel Community.

France the Key

M. Monnet now believes that France is the key country. He had hoped that France would take the lead in a European union, as she did in proposing the Coal and Steel Community (which M. Mendes-France voted for in the Assembly). He now sees France turning nationalist in spite of strong sentiment for a union, and he wants to do what he can to strengthen and organize this sentiment before the nationalistic trend goes too far.

M. Mendes-France's visit to the United States is partly to explain his policies to officials and to the public, partly to discuss foreign policy—notably as regards North Africa and Indochina. He is now strongly supported in the country and has a fair though uncertain majority in Parliament. Monnet, not a politician, is generally considered the ardent apostle of an idea to which nearly all pay obeisance in principle, but to which few bring in Parliament.

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